

## REGULATION

### **The Rise of Bureaucratic Schools and Teacher Regulation: Control in the Interests of Efficiency**

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**E**arly in the twentieth century, a document listed the duties of teachers on a single, typed piece of paper. These duties were proscriptive and included ensuring that students didn't run in the hallway (North Vancouver High School). By the end of the twentieth century, school manuals for teachers were hundreds of pages in length and described teacher policies in detail for all sorts of topics, from class management to fieldtrips (North Vancouver High School, 1978). These policy changes illustrate how the bureaucratization of schools over the twentieth century was intertwined with the increased regulation and control of teachers. Ironically, while the language of the "professional" teacher rose along with government certification, teachers were increasingly controlled through policies and procedures. In this paper, I will describe the meaning and processes of the bureaucratization of schools and teachers focused on a case study of British Columbia which illustrates how bureaucratization, while increasing efficiencies, led to increased government regulation of teachers. To frame the paper, I begin by describing key concepts and include relevant discussions of the bureaucratization of schools in the UK and US.

#### **Modernization, Capitalism, Rationalization, and Bureaucratization**

Bureaucratization's underlying ideological roots lie in the discourse of modernization (Weber, 1978). A discourse rooted in European Enlightenment thinking, modernization values growth, increased technical capability, knowledge and training, division of labour and specialization, competition, and democracy (McDonald, 2009). It encompassed the belief that men (this word is deliberately used, as it was men) could manage nature through reason and scientific investigation. As John Locke stated, "Reason is natural revelation" (Locke, 1689).

Modernization was linked to increases in population, industrialization, urbanization, changing social structures, and the rise of capitalism, which aimed to maximize profits through rationalized means. Adam Smith, for example, described processes that would increase the profit of industrialists: by dividing labourers' works into simple tasks, workers would be able to create more widgets, nails, or other products, thus increasing the factory or (capital) owner's profit:

The division of labour, however, so far as it can be introduced, occasions, in every art, a proportionable increase of the productive powers of labour. The separation of different trades and employments from one another, seems to have taken place, in consequence of this advantage (Smith, 1776, 1.1.4).

Other means for increasing profit included scientific management procedures such as setting up a clear hierarchy of control, rationally dividing a process up into steps in order to see how to increase efficiencies and establishing standardized procedures and policies.

Bureaucratization was the corresponding structural form of these discourses of modernization, capitalism, and scientific rationalization (Weber, 1978). Social institutions including government, schools and businesses established bureaucracies—professional, regulated, and hierarchical social structures based in legal and rationalistic governance—for the efficient management of people and coordination of projects. Bureaucratization established a clear hierarchy of authority usually presented diagrammatically as a triangle, with power residing at the top and flowing down from there. It also encompassed developing codes of conduct and clear policies that established a formal and impersonal tone and managed how behavior was to occur, dividing individuals' work into areas of specialization based on education, and promoting individuals to higher levels in the administrative structure based on their achievement. The entire structure was rationalized and aimed to maximize efficiency.

Bureaucratization began in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Canada and the United States, and spread to many fields. It was particularly evident in government during the 1930s, when workers were hired to work on public works projects and the 1940s when individuals were hired for World War II positions and efficiency was valued to help win the war (McDonald, 2009). Schools exemplified bureaucratization. In fact, I would argue that, as public school systems were set up in the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada as bureaucratization was occurring, bureaucratic forms and efficiency were part of their structural form.

### **The Bureaucratization of Schools**

After reviewing the process of the bureaucratization of public schools in the United States and the United Kingdom, this paper will describe the process in British Columbia.

#### ***United States***

*When I arrived the first day of school, forty students and parents were waiting to greet me. I knew my college classes had not prepared me for what was in store....The school was an early*

*1900s building made of wood by parents of the children in the neighbourhood...The ceilings were high and dark (Montell, 2011, p. 32).*

*Since I lacked experience, I modeled my teaching strategy after the teacher who had taught me...Instruction began with putting the assignments on the blackboard for the upper grades. I then began with the first grade teaching ABC's and reading with the children. I usually spent about 15 minutes with each group. If the older students finished their work, they could help the younger kids... I was not just the teacher, I was also the nurse, counselor, janitor, and whatever else was required (Montell, 2011, p. 35).*

In the nineteenth century, schools were locally established and run. Generally, small communities established one-room schools, which varied greatly in their conditions, teachers and curriculum materials. American Educational reformers argued against these schools with their variable schedules, class sizes, curricula and forms of teaching. Over time, these reformers, with government support, were successful in establishing a centralized, professionalized, rationalized system, run by experts, with a standardized curriculum (Tyack, 1974). This process occurred in a piecemeal manner, beginning in urban areas in the northeastern US and then spreading to rural areas. Katz (1987), for example, describes how Boston moved from having a haphazard pay system for schoolmasters to one that was centralized and included pay schedules and blanket policies. Bureaucratization, further, was tied to the feminization of teaching.

This process continued in the early twentieth century with the rise of scientific rationalism, which I would argue to be the second stage in the rationalization of schools (the first stage was the establishment of public schools, public curricula, and hierarchical schools governance). Scientific rationalism involved the adoption of Fordism business methods into schools and other means aimed at improving efficiency, and used means such as cost accounting methods, compulsory attendance laws, child labour laws, dividing students by grade, streaming students through testing, a more complex administrative structure, and platooning (Callahan, 1962; Dunn, 1980). Varied curricula, based in contemporary psychological work, aimed to “fit” students into their “places” in society (Bobbitt, 1918).

### ***United Kingdom***

The bureaucratization of schools occurred in a series of steps in the United Kingdom (Doheny, 1991). First, the government provided funding to establish public schools across the nation. As the government then wanted to ensure that the money had been well spent, inspectors were hired to go into schools. These inspectors led to standardization across schools as a series of expectations were developed. School inspections went along with the increasing control of teachers through classroom visits and the certification of teachers through the establishment of teachers colleges that were monitored by the government. Certification raised the professional status of teachers while also standardizing expectations and controlling curriculum and teaching approaches. The government wanted to ensure that schools were effective and so common examinations were established. These exam results were used to determine if schools received their government grants. Schooling was then made compulsory.

### ***British Columbia***

British Columbia followed the processes of bureaucratization that occurred in the United States and United Kingdom. As in the UK, the government took over school management through funding. The government provided grants to communities that wanted to establish schools. However, the schools had to be accountable to the government, and school inspectors were set up to visit schools and report on them. These inspectors also evaluated teachers using standardized forms. For example, one teacher's inspection report of 1928 commented on the "tone" of her room, discipline, and teaching ability-methods, along with general comments (Brough, 1928, p. 1). In the nineteenth century, the government (under the Superintendent of Schools) issued varied types of teaching certificates based on teachers' achievement on tests. Normal schools were then established to train and certify teachers. The first Normal school in BC opened in 1901.

Certification professionalized teachers. However, at the same time, certification was tied to regulating what teachers could teach, what methods were recommended and what was considered good teaching. Thus, professionalization led to the increased control of teachers. Letters of complaint sent to the BC government during the nineteenth century, further, describe how government officials removed teachers who were teaching in small, one rooms schools that had not been certified by the government (Superintendent of Education correspondence, 1858-1899). These teachers had been hired locally. The government also developed curriculum documents and recommended school textbooks, implemented compulsory schooling, monitored school attendance rates and set up standardized exams. For example students had to pass an exam to enter high school.

During the early twentieth century, in the age of "high modernity," British Columbians were attracted to liberalism that emphasized planning and expertise (McDonald, 2009). As in the United States, scientific rationalism was the second step, which increased government officials' efforts to control schools. This included the consolidation of rural schools as recommended in the Cameron Report (1946). Consolidating schools districts established larger, comprehensive schools to which students were bused to increase school efficiencies. School governance also became increasingly complex.<sup>1</sup> During colonial times, the superintendent of education managed educational affairs, reporting to the governor-in-council. After the Public School Act of 1872, a provincial board of education and superintendent were in control until the Department of Education (renamed Ministry of Education in 1976) was set up in 1920. A number of divisions were added to the department after 1920 in areas such as distance education and testing. These various divisions exerted further control over teachers. For example, Conway became the Department of Education's standardized testing expert over most of the twentieth century (Fleming, 1996).

Generally, in BC society in the early twentieth century, we see the rise of the "expert," "that is, the individual who was certified through study and who was believed to be able to bring social progress (Harris, 1976-7; Owram, 1986). The concept of the expert applied both to

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<sup>1</sup> See <https://www2.viu.ca/homeroom/content/schools/Public/orgchart.htm> for diagrams illustrating the increasing complexity of school governance.

teachers, who were certified through normal school study and thus recognized as professional teachers, as well as educational administrators who were generally further educated through Masters and PhD programs. For example, Weir who became Minister of Education in the 1930s had a PhD. Weir mentioned the role that “experts” played in developing new curriculum documents (Weir, 1937). The use of academics as experts in government was a national trend at this time, illustrating a belief that trained individuals could address social challenges (Owran, 1986). King, appointed chief inspector of schools by Weir, also had a PhD.<sup>2</sup> King’s correspondence illustrates him to be embedded in social efficiency (scientific rationalism) theory.

*Dr. King’s Correspondence (BC Archives)*

A miscellaneous collection of letters sent by King across the province during his time as Chief Inspector of Schools illustrate some of the concerns and issues facing teachers in the late 1930s (King, 1936-7). He received letters asking for books, teaching aids from the United States (on a series of books on topics for “slow learners,” health education and correspondence). He received requests for information on the New York superintendent’s report on a health problems study, and requests for information on accrediting schools in the United States, safety, help with selecting texts and information on guidance, the new report card and school timetables. Dr. King wrote to Edmonton asking that they share their organizational details and their report cards, and wrote to the Canadian Teachers’ Federation for their report on school salaries/schedules. In sum, many letters related to school curriculum changes that included new courses in guidance and health education and to teaching-related issues.

Further, Dr. King was asked for advice on how to how measure student achievement on tests properly and how to design an achievement test, to which he replied that the test should have sufficient test items to effectively test students, and that the questions should be answered correctly by 50% of the students. The questions were to be arranged by difficulty and given to give to “as many grade III and VI pupils as you can lay your hands on” (King, 25 October 1939). King recommended that the tests be marked and that students then be arranged by their marks, notwithstanding their grade levels. The examiner, Dr. King stated, would be able to determine the difficulty of each question based on how students answered it and select questions that identified “good” and “poor pupils” (King, 25 October 1939). King also shared an “aptitude”–intelligence test which “measures the student’s present status with respect to capacity for school learning” on 19 October 1939.

In 1936 and 1937, Drs. Weir and King had implemented a new curriculum in BC. The guides’ introduction contained a mix of progressivist (in the child centered sense) and social efficiency concepts (Broom, 2008; Department of Education, 1936-7). King received a letter from the national Dominion Bureau of Statistics asking whether King had received

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<sup>2</sup> Dr. King’s biography: “King, Herbert Baxter, B.A. ’13. Queen’s Univ.; M.A. ’23, Univ. Of British Columbia; B. Paed. ’29, Univ. Of Toronto Ph.D, ’36, Univ. Of Wash,; Technical Adviser to the Provincial Dept. Of Educ., Victoria, B.C., Canada, 1934-39; Chief Inspector of Schools of the Province of British Columbia, since September, 1939” (King, 25 October 1939).

criticisms about one of the new social studies units that had students study materials similar to the progressivist-developed “Problems of Democracy” program from the United States. It had students look at “modern problems” in society. King replied that, “our teachers of the Social Studies were for the most part trained in political history. They have therefore to make many readjustments before we can feel that Social Studies objectives are being achieved” (King, 11 October 1939, p. 1). This letter illustrates challenges in implementing new curricula.

One letter is particularly insightful. In a reply to a letter stating that teachers were not allowed to express their opinions, King (11 October 1939) stated: “The Department of Education does not employ the instrument of fear and coercion. Teachers are not prohibited in any way from expressing their opinion upon education, though it is expected that persons will do so with appropriate language and weight based on factors such as intelligence” (p. 2). He stated that teachers needed to be open minded and continue to grow.

King’s correspondence illustrates him to be an “expert” (Harris, 1976; Oworm, 1986) embedded in educational thought of his time, particularly the social efficiency conceptions of schooling. His advice focused on testing using rationalized, and “scientific” approaches and he made reference to contemporary American work. He attempted to control teachers in BC through means such as sharing ideological materials, testing, school inspections, and direct coercion.

Ironically, as teachers came to be seen as professionals through normal school education and certification, they lost freedom to select, design and teach curricula themselves, and they became externally managed through inspection reports, curriculum documents and long lists of policies they had to follow. However, at the same time, teachers resisted this implementation of control (Broom, 2015a), and even pushed back through appeals to the council of instruction and court cases (Broom, 2015b).

### **Discussion/Conclusion**

In the late nineteenth century, public schools were established in the age of modernization, rationalization, and bureaucratization. I have argued that public schools reflected these influences in their forms and processes. They were established through the use of money (grants to schools) and certification. Early in the twentieth century, this was taken further when scientific rationalism was applied to school governance. This included more complex administrative structures and the implementation of processes that aimed to increase the social and economic efficiencies of schools through means such as testing, grades, streaming, the professionalism and certification of teachers, increased division of labour, and the consolidation of schools (Callahan, 1962; Dunn, 1980). Public schools are an excellent example of Max Weber’s bureaucratization theory.

*What issues were those who supported bureaucratization trying to address?* A British Report described the need for order and regulation. The report portrayed local governance as piecemeal, disordered, and based in patronage (McDonald, 2009). These issues were

present in BC. For example, a 1913 inquiry into the Vancouver school board described corruption among the Vancouver Board of School Trustees, illustrating how trustees mismanaged their duties and acted in their self-interest. They engaged in actions such as giving building contracts to family/friends, omitting documents presented to the board for a vote, using certain lands for schools, failing to attend meetings and falsifying the use of funds. One trustee, for example, borrowed funds from a contractor, supporter his bid, and asked him to misrepresent the situation. Another official removed teachers and then offered them another contract for which he was to get a commission of 2% of the teachers' salary. The commissioner concluded:

...it is hard to understand how a Board handing such large sums of money and elected by the people to supervise and intelligently conduct matters, could be so ignorant of what was going on, in connection with buildings, ect. And especially in connection with financial matters. The result has been a direct loss to the public of an amount of money impossible to estimate, but the extent of several thousands of dollars and the only explanation I could get how such a state of affairs could exist was that "they could not afford to give the necessary time to School Board matters...From what I have been, If I may be permitted to do so, I would strongly recommend that some systems of auditing be adopted by the Education Department and that a standard set of books be insisted upon for all School Boards throughout the Province. (Alexander, 1913)

*The new system aimed to address these issues, as well as increasing social complexity. Bureaucratization, however, while efficient, brought its own issues. Harvey (1990) has characterized the process as "positivistic, technocratic, and rationalistic" (p. 9). Weber's metaphor was the iron cage. Through rationalized means, and while appearing to empower teachers through professionalization, bureaucratization actually led to increased control of teachers and students, resulting in a loss of individual rights and freedoms, in mechanistic systems within which we find pockets of resistance. As we move further into the twenty-first century, are there other options open to us, or have bureaucratic schools become the norm (Tyack, 1974)?*

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